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The CIA certainly didn't start out like this

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WASHINGTON — The Church committee's report on the CIA's involvement in assassination plans, is, among other things, a monument to the miscarriage of a famous law creating the CIA 28 years ago.

The main cause of the miscarriage was the Cold War and the feeling it engendered that the end of achieving security against the supposed Soviet threat justified the means. Contributing factors were quirks in the law itself, which came about long ago through coincidence.

The law is the National Security Act of 1947, the principal purpose of which was not to create the CIA but to achieve the so-called unification of the armed services. The CIA was incidental to the larger goal of co-ordinating military policy and foreign policy.

Even so, members of the 80th Congress who voted for the act went out of their way to try to nail down the limits of the CIA's authority, and some of those old tigers would have been astounded at the things the CIA has done at home and abroad since the legislation cleared Congress and was signed by President Truman July 26, 1947.

Incredible as later events were to be, however, a re-reading of the 1947 hearings almost suggests that the legislators of a generation ago instinctively feared that the CIA might get into just such things as domestic wiretapping, outfitting E. Howard Hunt Jr. with equipment for breaking into the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist, preparing psychological profiles on Ellsberg and subsidizing business, labor, church and student

groups through a maze of foundations.

Congress tried to legislate limits simply because it was nervous about creating for the first time in American history a huge peacetime intelligence establishment. The role of such an agency in a democracy posed questions, and it catches the eye how worried reference to the Gestapo kept creeping into the hearings on the bill.

Rep. Clarence J. Brown (R., Ohio) said that while he wanted the country to have the finest intelligence service, he did not wish the President—any President—"to have a Gestapo of his own." He inquired at a hearing whether the proposed CIA "might possibly affect the rights and privileges of the people of the United States."

"No sir," replied Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg, director of Central Intelligence under a previous interim intelligence establishment. "I do not think there is anything in the bill, since it is all foreign intelligence; that can possibly affect any of the privileges of the people of the United States."

Rep. Henderson Lanham (D., Ga.) asked another witness, Vannevar Bush, whether there was danger that the CIA would "become a Gestapo or anything of that sort?"

"I think there is no danger of that," replied Dr. Bush as chairman of the Joint Research and Development Board. "The bill provides clearly that (the CIA) is not concerned with intelligence on internal affairs, and I think that is a safeguard against its becoming an empire. We already have, of course, the FBI in this country concerned with internal matters..."

James V. Forrestal, then secretary

of the Navy, assured a House committee: "The purposes of the Central Intelligence (Agency) are limited definitely to purposes outside of this country, except the collation of information gathered by other government agencies."

"Collation" was a clue to understanding what was being asked of Congress. The CIA was to be an organization for centrally gathering and co-ordinating information. The CIA was to collect, evaluate, estimate.

Truman's CIA proposal was bare of any details on the duties of the proposed CIA and simply provided for the transfer to it of the functions, personnel, property and records of the Central Intelligence Group. When the House took up the question, how-

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